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ABSTRACT

English departments in Arab universities have been in an uncertain state from their beginning for lack of specific policy on the emphasis to be given to English or comparative literature, English or general linguistics, or a combination. Leanings toward English literature have always been evident, but course offerings and faculty recruitment show a general lack of direction. Although the English language is used broadly in the Arab world, English departments have failed to produce linguistically competent graduates. On the assumption that Arab universities should prepare graduates who can work effectively for the social and economic needs of their countries, it is proposed that English departments should teach the English language and provide an understanding of the culture rather than try to acculturate Arab students into the English system as they have traditionally done. The necessary English language skills include spoken and written communicative fluency, reading and translation skills, and research capability. In addition, English departments should contribute to better international and intercultural understanding, collaborate with other departments to provide a broad-based education, serve the English language needs of other departments, and direct graduate programs in applied linguistics and English as a foreign language. A 33-item bibliography is appended. (MSE)

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Formulating Objectives for the English Departments in Arab Universities : Rationale and Assessment

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A B S T R A C T

In this paper, the writer attempts to state and argue for a set of objectives for the English department in the Arab World after a brief discussion of the socio-linguistic dimensions of English language use in the Arab world and in the light of a number of theoretical assumptions that have a direct bearing on the objectives. Then, he investigates whether these objectives have been achieved and, finally, looks into reasons for the failure of the English department to achieve its objectives.

It is assumed in this paper that the English department is to respond to the needs of the Arab society. Many sectors of the Arab society need and use English for a number of practical, utilitarian purposes, the motivation of the Arab learner of English is "instrumental" in nature, and the Arab society would like to be open to other cultures. The major objectives of the English department, based on these assumptions, is to graduate 'competent' English specialists, service the needs of other departments in an Arab university, participate in the provision of an all round education to the graduates, and 'take care' of the research needs of English for Arab learners.

Research evidence, though scanty and restricted in coverage, shows that the English department has failed to achieve its objectives. Absence of departmental policies, pre-occupation with the teaching of English literature, imbalances

in the curriculum and lack of professionally trained faculty members were viewed as major reasons for the failure of the English department to achieve the objectives as specified earlier.

Formulating Objectives for the English Departments in Arab Universities: Rationale and Assessment*

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The English departments in Arab universities have been in a state of uncertainty since their establishment. Starting with the name "English department" the question of whether they are departments of English language, English literature, comparative literature, Arabic linguistics, general linguistics or the five combined always arises. An examining look at the course offerings in a number of these departments shows a lack of direction in objectives, but does not conceal a strong tilt towards the teaching of English literature. In terms of faculty and teaching staff recruitment, these departments have been as ill-defined. They house the Arabic linguist whose interest in English language or literature teaching is tertiary at best, the literature specialist who has always convincingly argued

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against his involvement in teaching the basic language skills, and the language pedagogue who has been considered an intruder; since language teaching has been assumed to be commonsensical.

In my search for objectives for these departments, I have not come across any reference to the objectives in the literature. However, the need for a statement of objectives to clearly define the role of these departments in Arab academic institutions has recently become an issue of concern, not only for those involved in teaching in those departments, but also for language and education planners in the Arab World. In Egypt, for example, a conference was held at the University of Ain Shams in April 1982 and another was held at the University of Cairo in March 1982 to discuss this issue among many others in English language teaching in Egypt (Center for Developing English Language Teaching, 1982). But in response to the particular needs of the English departments at Arab Universities the University of Jordan hosted the first major conference wholly devoted to an open discussion of the problems of teaching English Language and Literature at Arab Universities in April 1982. The issues raised in the conference were varied, but they all were central to writing a detailed statement of objectives. These issues were addressed both by Arab and foreign faculty members representing universities in Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iraq and by four international authorities in language and literature from America, Germany, Poland and Sweden. A selected number of the papers is to be published by the University of Jordan. The final recommendations which were circulated to all those attending the conference (Recommendations Drafting Committee 1982) are worth looking into.

The recommendations focussed on three major issues: entrance requirements, objectives and curriculum, and research. It was recommended that new entrants to the departments of English be selected through a systematic screening process which includes an assessment of the students' receptive and productive linguistic abilities with a view to selecting those students with a basic command of English and devising an intensive remedial English program to overcome the students' major weaknesses and difficulties. Such a program is viewed as a 'gateway' to the department. Regarding objectives, it was recommended that the departments state their objectives in measurable terms stressing "overall linguistic receptive and intelligible expressive abilities, both spoken and written". In the area of curriculum, it was recommended that objectives and methods of literature teaching be re-examined to include the teaching of World Literature. Literary textbooks are to be re-evaluated by department professors for their compatibility with the accepted moral codes of the Arab World. Language courses are to concentrate on the communicative skills, spoken and written.

Another recommendation was concerned with research in the departments of English. It was recommended that priorities be given to classroom oriented research in such areas as discourse analysis, contrastive and error analyses. More coordination among the departments of English in the Arab World was also recommended. The establishment of an association of University professors of English at Arab Universities was viewed as a permanent link as well as a channel through which exchange of ideas can be communicated. The 'steering committee' elected in the last session of the conference met a year later in Kuwait and initiated

preliminary action towards the foundation of the association.

In December, in the same year, 1982, the Association of Arab Universities called for a conference which was held at the United Arab Emirates' University in Al-'Ayn, Abu-Dhabi on "Departments of English in the Arab World: Aims and Policies Revisited." Delegates representing English departments of universities in the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Jordan, Palestine, Sudan and Algeria attended the conference. The same issues raised in Amman were re-addressed in Abu-Dhabi. The recommendations stressed that the objectives of the English departments in Arab Universities respond to the needs of the Arab society. More coordination among English departments in Arab Universities, and more exchange of ideas among faculty members were called for.

However, just a few of these recommendations have been seriously implemented. Still, these meetings can be considered as landmarks on the way of redefining the role of the English departments at Arab Universities.

In this paper, I will venture to state and argue for a set of objectives for the English department in the Arab World in the light of a set of theoretical assumptions that have a direct bearing on these objectives. I will then address the attainment of these objectives as to how far they have been achieved and as to how to achieve them. However, before I tackle the issue of objectives, I need to touch on the historical as well as the sociolinguistic dimensions of the issue.

The early English departments in the Arab World were es-

tablished to serve the needs of the British mandate in a number of Arab countries: to graduate English speaking administrators, government officials and clerks; and to spread the language and the culture of the colonizers. Consequently, it was not surprising to see these departments as replicas of English departments at home with due emphasis being laid on the literary-cultural components of English. Hardly ever has there been any significant changes in the programs of these departments. The residual political influence of the English speaking countries, mainly Britain and America, still partly accounts for the wide scale teaching of English in the Arab World. Former Anglophone colonial status still remains a predictor of the status and spread of English worldwide (Fishman et al., 1977). However, knowledge of the language remained at this stage a privilege for the elite in the Arab countries and for those closely associated with the colonial administration.

After World War II, Arab states started to gain their independence from Britain and France. However, in spite of the resentment for the colonial West and the consecutive deep felt disappointments of the Arabs with the West, the Arab governments maintained strong ties with the West. The western-educated Arab is now the leader and the policy maker in the Arab World. Consequently, the need for English as a language can be seen in this sociopolitical context. In the meanwhile, English started to acquire an international status as the language of international communication; science, technology, trade, business, tourism, diplomacy, aviation, and most important of all, higher education. It has already reached a stage where it is described as "a true World Lingua Franca" (Samarin 1962: 73), "a language of wider communication" (Fishman et al.,

1975: 7), and "an international auxiliary language" (Smith 1977: 337). With that trend in Arab politics and the growth in the status of English worldwide, the average Arab has been under pressure to be bilingual. This kind of bilingualism has led to the development of an ambivalent attitude towards the western culture and the Arab culture which in turn led to the "consequent disruption of the cultural continuum between the upper and lower reaches of Arab society" creating a sense of alienation between the two cultures (Patai 1976: 308-9).

In spite of the sincere concern of a considerable number of educators for maximizing the use of Arabic, the national language, especially in education, and in spite of the outrageous political policies of the English speaking West in the Arab World, English remains dominant especially as a language of business, science, technology and education. The "big" talk about Arabicization cannot be taken seriously from the upper reaches of Arab leadership. A case in point here is an example from Jordan. According to the by-laws of Yarmouk University, Jordan, Arabic is the official language of instruction in the university (Yarmouk University by-laws, 1976). However, the use of Arabic in the schools of business, science and even humanities is the exception rather than the rule. To make things even worse, the university has recently enacted a new regulation whereby if a student entering the University in 1982-3 fails his English language university requirements twice, he is to be dropped from the university no matter what his area or speciality is.

English is in big demand indeed in the Arab World. Because of such a role for the language, Arab North Africa is shifting from French to English. The British Council Pro-

file of Tunisia (1982) concludes that the inevitable decline in Tunisian French offers an unquestionable opportunity for the development of English, especially that the encouragement of English teaching is an official government policy. However, the following Council's conclusion (1977) about the situation in Morocco is revealing:

> "There is a recurrent blacklash from the French at the 'imperialism' of English and at times one can see their concern about the dominant position of French for political, economic and cultural reasons. In fact, English in no way threatens French as the second language at present ... the real threat to French comes from the promotion of Arabic ....."

Assumptions and Assessment of Needs

My basic assumption in the course of exploring the objectives of the English department in the Arab World was reiterated by Jawad (1982) who firmly states that universities in the Third World should be entirely devoted to the actual needs of the social and economic development of these countries. Education for education's sake, and "maintaining expensive universities just for the sake of completing our 'decor' as independent states" are luxuries that cannot be afforded even in oil rich countries. Otherwise, as Jawad concludes, "Third World universities face the tragic result of becoming merely badly organized museums of knowledge."

To formulate a pragmatic base for the objectives of an English department in the Arab World, we need to shed light

on the immediate needs of the Arab society for English, English language use, and consequently, the reasons that motivate the Arab to learn English. These questions can best be answered through wide-scale field surveys and systematic research into these main issues. I will try to provide some answers from available research in the area.

One of the few field surveys assessing the needs of an Arab country for English is that of Harrison et al. (1975) which was co-sponsored by the Ford Foundation and the Center for Applied Linguistics and conducted in Jordan in 1972. The random sample of 4,804 Jordanians -- overwhelmingly Moslem males and city dwellers representing the private and public sector employees -- were selected to respond to a questionnaire investigating English use at work and outside work and reasons for studying English, among many other dimensions of English learning and teaching in Jordan. According to the findings of the survey, 63% of the respondents indicated they use English at work of whom 89% use it second most frequently. The 63% who indicated that they use English at work were mostly employed in administrative or managerial jobs (85%), followed by sales people (74%), professional or technical workers including teachers (70%) and clerical and related employees (62%). A relatively small proportion of those with little education report using English. Seventy-eight percent of all respontents regarded English as being either helpful or necessary for job success. Those employed in managerial and administrative posts reported the greatest need for English, followed by technical and professional employees. Forty-one percent of the 63% of all the respondents (those who reported that they use English at work) use English to discuss business or technical matters at least once a day with their colleagues (32%), with their

superiors (26%), and with clients and subordinates (21%).

Which language skills are used by Jordanians? The data in the survey indicates that Jordanians use English most frequently to read for professional advancement or to read instructions or directions. Second most frequently to fill out forms and write business letters and then to communicate orally with colleagues and superiors.

Outside work, the survey indicates that 15% of all respondents use English for informal communication. 39% of all respondents use English once or more a day to listen to the ratio, T.V. and for movies. 21% use English daily in reading for professional advancement.

The motivation of the Jordanian learner of English is obviously "instrumental" (as opposed to "integrative") in nature. In other words, the learner's interest is in the utilitarian aspects of English language learning. According to the survey, "the concensus of the respondemts was that the most important reason for studying English is because a person who masters English has a much better chance of studying abroad or obtaining a job abroad as well as in Jordan." The least important reason to learn English is gaining access to World literature. The authors (Harrison et al. 1975: 104) conclude that their data "suggest strongly that (the) respondents view English as a vehicle for educational and occupational mobility." This conclusion has been consistently supported by a number of studies, including some studies conducted on Arab students who have been studying in Egnlish speaking countries, and particularily America, such as those of Maple (1978), Zughoul et al. (1979), Salih (1980) and Zughoul and Taminian (1982).

In his investigation of the relationship between attitudes and proficiency in English of public school students in Amman, Salih (1982: 54-58), for example, concluded that the Jordanian students' overall attitudes towards learning English are favorable. Although Jordanian students were found to be "integratively oriented towards English learning" (meaning they have very strong motivation to learn the language), they were not integratively oriented towards the culture of the community whose language they are learning. Jordanian students viewed Jordanians higher than their English speaking counterparts on 10 out of 15 bipolar attributes. Zughoul et al. (1979: 11-12), in their study of the attitudes of Arab students enrolled at the Intensive English Program of the University of Texas at Austin concluded that the attitudes of Arab students are 'instrumental' as opposed to the integrative motivation of the control group in the study who were Spanish speakers enrolled at the same program. The conclusion was based on the responses of the two groups on eight items of an attitudinal questionnaire six of which were adapted from Gardner's 1974 study. Arab students also showed more extreme views in language and culture than the Latins did. Arab students, without exception judged Arabic to have attributes superior to those of English. The Spanish speakers did not use such superlatives regarding beauty, logic, precision, complexity and sacredness of their language in comparison with English as those used by Arab students. The findings of this study were coroborated by Zughoul and Taminian's (forthcoming) study of the linguistic attitudes of Arab university students as represented by a sample of 412 Yarmouk University students.

Commenting on the 'instrumental' nature of Arab students towards the learning of English, Wood (1983) identifies

the problems of some foreign faculty members teaching English in the Arab World and stresses the need to meet the instrumental motivation of Arab students. Reflecting on his own experience, Wood maintains that:

> "Native teachers of English who are unaware of or do not accept, the instrumental orientation of most Arab and other non-native students of English are in for a rude awakening. As a student of the politics of language, I had no illusions about this, but I have seen some sad cases among anglophone professors especially those with major backgrounds in, say, American studies, folkolre and literature."

Put in a nutshell, the instrumental nature of the motivation of Arab students necessitates that we teach them the language and have them understand the culture rather than "acculturate" them.

Jordanian parents are well aware of the instrumentality of English, too. In Harrison et al.'s study, 93% of all the respondents considered their children's development of effective communication skills in English to be "very important".

One remaining sector of the Arab society is the "elite" which makes the policy; educational, linguistic and political. How does this most important sector view English? Patai (1976: 309) views Arabic-Western language bilingualism as a manifestation of marginality (the state of belonging to two cultures without being able to identify oneself completely with either) which has engulfed the educated elite in most Arab countries, and as a result of this marginality they wish to assimilate in Western culture but they are unable to internalize it completely.

His concluding statement about the reflection of this marginality on the shaping of policy making is more revealing. He concludes:

> "With a very few exceptions (notably in the Arabian Peninsula), the political leaders of the Arab world are all Westernized men, all know either English or French (occasionally better than Arabic), and all are inclined to measure the cultural, social, and economic level of their countries by Western standards rather than by their own time honored traditions which they tend to consider outmoded. Whether they are hereditary monarchs or presidents; whether their political orientation is pro-Western, neutral, or emphatically anti-Western; whether they rule autocratically, dictatorially, or democratically; whether they are heads of state or occupy positions in their government one or more rungs beneath the summit - alsost all the Arab political leaders are deeply influenced by the West. And, being Westernized, they cannot help looking with Western (or near-Western) eyes at the interests of their non-Westernized, traditional Muslim Arab countrymen who constitute the majority of the population in every Arab state. Their task, therefore, as they see it, is twofold: to bring Western-inspired innovations to their peoples, and to re-educate them so that they should see in those innovations improvements and be willing to accept them."

In addition to those immediate technical needs, the Arab society can be assumed to have a real purpose in being open to other cultures with a view to continuing its contribution to human knowledge and the promotion of international understanding through "breaking the cultural and linguistic barriers". It is assumed that through the study of another language and another culture the individual learns more about himself, gains insight into life, tolerance, flexibility, discipline and gains new learning skills (Chastain 1976: 7).

One further assumption is that the image of the Arab is distorted worldwide, and particularily in the English speaking West. We need to present our points of view to the world or to interpret the Arab culture to the West. Though this can be achieved through English, knowledge of other languages can be as effective if not even more effective than being restricted to English. We have been looking at the world through western media and restricting ourselves to reading the English speaking version of other cultures and points of view.

Based on observations, assumptions and available research evidence, the graduate of the English department in the Arab World is expected to take such jobs as a teacher, interpreter, administrative aid, clerk, sales person, editor, etc. where his knowledge of the language is called upon. According to the second category of assumptions, he, with further training and education, will be a man of letters, a writer, a diplomat or a high ranking government official. Still, his communicative competence in the language will be pivotal for success.

In both cases, the Arab student does not have an "intrinsic" interest in the English language; neither does the Arab society. What then can be a reasonable set of objectives based on such a rationale?

1. The major objective of the English department in the Arab World is to graduate "competent English specialists i.e. people who have acquired a native-like "competence" in English. If the word 'competent' needs to be specified in further operational terms, it means that the graduate:

a) can understand standard English as spoken by natives and non-natives in a variety of contexts and in different situations, and be able to recognize some major dialectal variations, emotional overtones, levels of discourse, sound patterns and grammatical sequences.

b) can express himself fluently in spoken English with comprehensible accuracy in phonology and close to native accuracy in syntax in different contexts and different situations.

c) can at a reasonable speed derive meaning from written English with ease and accuracy in different contexts.

d) can express himself fluently in writing using English idiomatic expressions showing mastery of the major syntactic structures of the language as well as the fine semantic distinctions expressed by frequent lexical and syntactic patterns of the language.

e) can with ease and accuracy translate messages and discourse in different contexts from Arabic into English and <u>vice versa</u>.

f) has gained an insight into the present day target culture which manifests then an understanding of the native speakers' modes of thinking and of their sociocultural patterns in the context of contrast to his own native culture and

g) has acquired the necessary linguistic and technical skills to carry out research.

2. Contribute, through familiarising the student with another culture, to better international understanding and to the promotion of cultural exchange.
3. Collaborate with other programs in the university to provide an all-round education to the student. Teaching English literature or literature written in English in the student native language -- Arabic -- is a particular example of this kind of collaboration.
4. Service the particular English language needs of other departments, colleges and faculties in the university by continually surveying these needs and writing, developing evaluating and teaching programs tailored to these needs. To be more specific, the objective here is to implement the international trend in language teaching wich is teaching Language for Special Purposes (LSP).
5. The research needs of English as a language or as a literature are well taken care of by scholars in the English speaking countries, but these needs of English as a foreign language taught to Arab students under these socio-cultural conditions are not well researched. It should be the responsibility of the English department to direct its graduate programs to the more applied fields of English linguistics and English as a foreign language.

Nowhere in the Arab World is there enough emphasis on the applied side of linguistics. The graduates of Applied Linguistics programs in British and American universities

are recruited into the Arab World as "experts" both by governments and by the private sector. In spite of the increasing number of linguists and literature specialists, nowhere in the Arab World are school English language textbooks written by Arabs, though foreign publishers sometimes include an Arab author on the board to make their offers more appealing. Even in Egypt where there has been an English department for the last three quarters of a century, a British publishing company is writing a series of textbooks for the government school. The textsbooks in use in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman and Abu-Dhabi have been written by British publishing houses. "Taking care" of English teaching in its varied dimensions should be one major objectiv for the graduate programs of these departments.

However, it should be made clear at this point that though our interest is in the language per se, the English department is not to be viewed as a language school or a linguaphone course, as Wood (1983) puts it. One main concern of these departments should always be the provision of an all round education for the graduates as indicated in objective number 3 earlier. Moreover, the English departments should not be brought down, especially in linguistic standards to the level of the student; they are to keep high standards and without these high standards the main purposes of the existence of such departments will be defeated.

Has the English department in the Arab World achieved or come close to achieving the objectives outlined in this paper? If not, why? In the following part of the paper I will try to answer these questions.

One of the potentially least controversial, but it lends itself easily to valid observations, measurement and documentation, is that related to the linguistic competence of the

graduate. It can be safely generalized that the English department has failed in turning out competent graduates.

Documented empirical research evidence with sufficient coverage of all the graduates for the failure of the English department is scanty. However, it has often been expressed by specialists and faculty members that the average English department graduate falls much behind achieving a resonable command of the language. Jawad (1982) for example, notes that English departments serve as a particular example of the "astronomical failure" of Arab universities in their contribution to a rising graphic line to indicate quality of graduates or excellence of research.

Research evidence in this area draws on proficiency testing of the graduates of the English department at Yarmouk University, Jordan. The writer administered the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP), a standardized measure of English proficiency developed by the English Language Institute of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and used for screening and placing foreign students at a number of American universities to three groups of graduates in June 1982 (76 students), December 1982 (42 students excluding graduates in the summer session), and in May 1982 (50 students). A total of 168 graduates took the test. The average equated score for the three groups was 68.22, 69.02, and 66.02 respectively, and for the three groups combined 67.75. This score which is below 70 is interpreted in the manual of the test as "Not proficient enough to take any academic work." This means that just a few of our graduates would qualify to meet the language requirements for admission into an English speaking university. English language teachin in Jordan, on the whole, compares favorably with other Arab countries. Yarmouk Uni-

versity graduates also compare favorably with the graduates of other Arab universities. In fact there are less students per class on the average, and the students at Yarmouk have better chances to be exposed to native speech than their colleagues at some other Arab universities.

Another piece of documented research evidence comes from Jordanian employers. Motivated by two studies investigating the level of satisfaction of English majors with their college preparation for the variety of jobs they hold after graduation and that of their employers conducted in America (Orange 1972 and The College Placement Council), Abu-Hamdia (1982) solicited the views of some of the employers of graduates who were in jobs that require the use of English and the views of the University of Jordan English department graduates to assess the efficiency of the preparation of the English major. Though the writer has failed to systematically report his data in statistical terms, he states the following unqualified conclusion:

> "In this survey no diversion of views was discerned as to the inadequacy of the preparation of English department students in the communicative skills both written and oral as called for by the job (to many of us this sounds like stating the obvious)."

Why has the English department failed to achieve its objectives? Why has it failed to respond efficiently to the needs of the employer, the student and the society? This failure can be attributed to a host of factors most important of which are those related to department policy, the curriculum, the student and the teacher.

1. Department policies.

In spite of serious efforts, nowhere could I find a state-

of policy or objectives for any of the English departments in the Arab World. One can probably assume that the policy of an English department is implied in the language planning policies of the Arab countries. However, language planning itself other than in the public school situation is almost absent in spite of the presence of a number of language planning institutions i.e. the academies. Sound language policies which are problem-solving based, future-oriented and whose outcomes and strategies are well specified in advance of action taken considering different relevant variables (Rubin and Jernudd 1975) are not in existence in Arab countries. Language planning in its broad sense involves the consideration of the social, cultural, economic, political and educational variables. The first step in initiating this kind of planning is the formulation of objectives. Once these objectives are clarified, the means can be selected and the outcomes predicted and then alternatives chosen (Rubin 1975). In the absence of a clearly stated set of objectives for the English department in the Arab World, it is just natural to see a lack of direction and plenty of controversy.

2. Imbalance in the curriculum.

Among the three main components of the present day English department curriculum, i.e. Language, Linguistics and Literature, the literature component has received the primary focus of the department. The graduate is made sure to cover the eras and genres of English literature with emphasis laid on pre-nineteenth century English literature. The proportion of the literature component to other components is 3:2 using reserved estimates.

The overemphasis on the teaching of English literature in its present format is the main contributing factor to, if

not the major stumbling block in the way of achieving the primary objective of the English department in the Arab World. Typically, the incoming student with his limited communicative ability in the language has to study works of English literature far ahead of his capabilities to make any sense of. He usually ends up glossing vocabulary items on his text. I tend to believe that rarely does the average English major reach a stage where he can enjoy and appreciate a literary piece. This belief is shared by many researchers. The British Council ELT Profile of Syria (1978) maintains that "a good number of students do not get to grips effectively with literature because of their poor standard in the language." According to the same profile, the inability of the English major to come to grips with literature explains the wastage at the University of Damascus where enrollment in the first year was 1,600 wasting to 400 in the fourth year of whom only 20% passed the final exams. The Profile for Iraq (1979) talks of the "growing awareness of the need to increase language expertise at the expense of the study of literature." The Profile for Tunisia (1981) explicitly states that one of the main obstacles to the progress of the language in Tunisia is the literary preoccupation of university English departments.

In an earlier paper (Zughoul 1982), the writer, based on research findings in the fields of linguistics and stylistics, and on specific socio-cultural considerations, questioned the validity of the inclusion of so much literature in the curriculum of the English department in the Arab World. On various grounds, the writer concluded that the only justification for the teaching of English literature is teaching it for a linguistic purpose. Such an approach necessitates shifts of emphasis from old to modern litera-

ture and from poetry to prose. It also, for cultural considerations necessitates the employment of selection criteria to avoid complex controversial material content.

The teaching of English literature in its present format is deemed to be a source of resentment by the Arab learner. This study does not interest him and consequently he considers his effort in this direction to be fruitless. English as a whole is a hostile literature which presents the worst and most biased image of the Arab and the Moslem. (See, for example, Nasir 1979 and Said 1979.) Dihayyat (1982), Safadi (1982) and Asfoor (1982) touched on English as a hostile literature and talked about the religious, moral and national problems of teaching it to Arab learners.

On the issue of religion, for example, Dihayyat (1982) maintains that English Literature draws heavily on the bible and Christian theological exegesis which in some particular beliefs such as the idea of crucifixion, of the godly and human nature of Christ and of the Eucharist, etc., "diametrically oppose the faith of the majority of our students who tend to judge the value of a certain work in the light of the religious convictions it relies on or evokes." Dihayyat (1982) as well as Asfoor (1982) gave examples from Chaucer and from Medieval romances which carry "anti-moslem feelings and undertones of a crusading spirit ... and prejudiced spirits against Moslems who are referred to as 'saracens' and 'infidels'"; and also from Dryden, Phillip Massenger and many others.

On the national level, English literature represents a culture "hostile to Arab causes", and in some works of this literature racism as well as the spirit of colonia-

lism are flatly portrayed. Asfoor (1982) gave the works of Rudiard Kipling and Tennyson as examples. Nasir (1979) traces the origins and development of the image of the Arab in English literature from the beginnings of contact at the time of the Ottoman Empire till the present. He gave examples from the accounts of English merchants, travellers, scholars and adventurers of the image of the Arab. The image of the Arab is distorted and unfairly portrayed on the whole. Among the thousands of examples provided by Nasir (1982), reference can in the way of examples be made to Ralf Fietch, John Eldred, Bedwell, Lignthgow, Sandy, Pitts, Chew, Pecoke (1773), Burkhardt, Burton, Blunt, Curzon, Doughty, Palgrave, Layard, Warburton, and T.E. Lawrence where the Arabs had been described as "thievish, plunderers, looters, saracens, infidels, uncivilised, wild, unmanageable, robbers, slaverers, cruel enemies of christianity, malicious, envious, primitive, naive, submissive, etc."

On the moral and ethical levels, English literature evokes a set of values and norms of behavior which can be considered as alien to our students. The 'overpermissiveness' and 'open treatment' of sex in some works is a case in point. Such treatment of sex can be 'disgusting, repulsive and embarrassing' in an Arab Islamic context as Dihayyat (1982) and Asfoor (1982) point out.

A number of alternative approaches to the teaching of the literature component in the English department in Arab universities have been proposed. The following alternatives are worth looking into and deserve serious consideration:

1. Teaching literature for a linguistic purpose and that necessitates a shift of emphasis from the study of old to the

study of modern and contemporary literature, and a shift of emphasis involving the literary genres; from poetry to prose. It also involves a shift in the criteria of selection; from aesthetic and historical to pedagogic (Widdoson 1975 and Zughoul 1982).

2. It was justifiable to teach English literature in English when the English were in full control of our educational institutions and were themselves the instructors. Now it is mainly the snobbishness of staff and students, among many other reasons, that keeps this situation. For the teachers to excel themselves, for the students to comprehend the material and for Arabic literature to benefit from the resultant contributions, it is the duty of the staff members as well as the departments to start teaching English literature in Arabic. (Jawad 1982)
3. If the ideal focus of our students or of our departments for that matter, is the study of literature, then the right reflection of that focus is the study of world literature. In such a case the establishment of a comparative literature department would serve the needs better. (Dihnyyat 1982)
4. Instead of following the pattern of English departments in English speaking countries, it would be more fruitful to follow the model of the Oriental and English departments in European countries where literature courses reflect a clear preference to modern literature and language courses seem to be more suited to the needs of the students and are more balanced. (Ibrahim 1982)
5. The "diffused focus on English as a language in the traditional English department setup" is behind underachievement in English language proficiency and the study of English as aesthetic verbal art reduces the chances for training students in "English as a Medium

of Communication (EMC)". Accepting a broader definition for literature to encompass works in both fact and fiction and adopting a "functionally oriented" language theory would solve the problem. Study of literature as a verbal art remains a privilege for those who have the aptitude for and the interest in it. (Okby 1982)

6. It is true that the cultural background of much English literature is hostile and specifically when colonialist values of some writers as Kipling or perhaps Conrad are considered. However, courses can be taught on Third World Literature and specifically enticolonialist literature in English such as Narayan, Naipaul, Brutus, Thiongo and Mphalele. These writers can be read alongside and contrasted with the colonialist authors. (Wood 1983)

Another potential source of imbalance in the curriculum is linguistics. With more linguists, sometimes linguists who have nothing to do with English teaching or English, the departments are forced to offer courses that cater for the interest of staff but are irrelevant to the student. The list of such courses at Yarmouk, for example, includes Languages in Contact, Dialectology and Generative Phonology. The student, in other words, is studying what the faculty members want to teach and not what he needs for his training and preparation. Teaching too many linguistics courses could be far worse than the teaching of literature in the present format as far as the competence of the prospective graduate is concerned.

3. The teacher.

English language teaching at the English department level in Arab universities is assumed to be a sort of 'common-

sense' for a Ph.D holder, even if the Ph.D is in an area not of direct relevance to English, which does not need any professional training. What I have in mind is an emerging phenomenon in the English department and it is the involvement, for non-academic reasons, of a growing number of 'Arabic linguists' who have neither the training nor the motivation to teach English, in English language teaching. A pattern has been established in western universities, especially in Britain or America, according to which an incoming student takes a number of courses in theoretical linguistics and writes a dissertation on an Arabic dialect. The graduate goes back to an English department because of the absence of departments of linguistics in Arab universities. Such a staff member is usually given communication skills, writing, translation and other language courses to teach. Those linguists have had no training in the teaching of English. The only reason why they are teaching English is that they received their higher education through the medium of English. There should be a drastic change of this view of language teaching before any progress can be made towards achieving the major objective of the English department.

4. The student.

The English department, a few years ago, used to attract some of the best students admitted to the university. Because of the increasing numbers of high school graduates and the increasing demand on schools of science, engineering, medicine and business, English departments do not receive the cream of the crop anymore.

The average high school graduate in Jordan, for example, needs intensive remedial work in English before he can carry a regular academic load in English. This kind of training

partment in an Arab university? Most important of all is the following searching question which was raised by Gallagher (1968) and which still begs for an answer:

> "Can a foreign language representing an impersonal, secular, unbelieving way of life co-exist with one fundamentally opposed to it in ethic, provided that the cross linkage of the latter with its religious foundation remains as reasonably strong as it is today?"

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